

Tackling land use and access issues

It's summer time and Albertans are heading out to enjoy our province's great outdoors. With ever-increasing demands on our public lands, there are a number of initiatives underway that are designed to address the access and land use issues that crop up. Pages one and two of this newsletter provide a summary of three projects that reflect the Integrated Resource Management principles of:

- cooperation
- communication
- coordination
- consideration of all values, and
- consultation before action.

West Yellowhead Corridor Tourism & Recreation Development Project

This 2000 Premier's Award-winning project addresses growing local land use pressures by proactively focusing commercial tourism and recreation development in nine designated areas along Highway 16 between Obed Lake in the east and near the Jasper National Park Gates in the west. Project participants include:

- Yellowhead County,
- Town of Hinton,
- Weldwood of Canada,
- Weyerhaeuser Canada,
- Alberta Economic Development,
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development,
- Alberta Energy,
- Alberta Transportation, and
- Alberta Environment

According to the June 1999 Memorandum of Understanding, Forest Management Agreement (FMA) holders will agree to withdrawals of lands from their FMAs for commercial tourism and recreation leases when those applying for development enter into a Disposition Withdrawal Agreement, and pay compensation directly to the FMA holder. Lease applicants are also required to obtain consent from those who hold long-term surface dispositions, such as grazing leases, where applicable.

For more information on this project, contact Judy May-McDonald, Alberta Environment (in Edson), by Email: judy.may-mcdonald@gov.ab.ca or by Fax: (780) 723-8542 or by Phone: (780) 723- 8505 (for toll-free long distance calls, dial 310-0000 then the number)

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To learn more about ShiftingGears contact your local Alberta Sustainable Resource Development forest office (toll-free 310-0000) or check out their Web site at: www.gov.ab.ca/srd/regions/southwest/shifting-gears/



For more information about this consultation process, or to obtain a copy of the final report and recommendations, contact:
Recreation Corridors Review
Phone: (780) 415-1167 or toll-free 310-0000
Fax: (780) 427-5140
Email: recreation.corridors@gov.ab.ca

Shifting Gears

ShiftingGears is a program led by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development to promote responsible off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and random camping on the eastern slopes and foothills of Alberta's Rocky Mountains. This spectacular 90,000-square-kilometre region is used by outdoor enthusiasts for hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, mountain biking, fishing, hunting, skiing, golfing and a range of other activities.

Shifting Gears will focus on the areas of heaviest OHV and random camping activity, from Highway 16 and the Yellowhead area in the north, to the Alberta-Montana border and the Castle River area in the south. Included are the Castle and Oldman rivers, McLean Creek, Ghost-Waiparous, Nordegg, and Cadomin regions.

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is working closely with regional RCMP to step up enforcement and educational efforts especially during times of peak use such as summer long weekends. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development Forest Officers, Conservation Officers and RCMP will conduct Check Stops to look for environmental damage, alcohol and vehicle violations, hand out educational material and inform visitors about the ShiftingGears program. The "zero tolerance" policy for infractions and ticketing is geared to eliminate illegal and irresponsible behaviour that threatens the environment and visitors' safety.

Several other provincial and regional outdoor user groups also are involved in ShiftingGears, including the Alberta United Recreationists Society, an umbrella group for a number of off-road and snowmobile clubs. Each fall, the society conducts successful Volunteer Days at various sites, including the Ghost-Waiparous and McLean Creek areas, to clean up the area, repair trails and bridge crossings, and foster environmental awareness. The ShiftingGears program also has the support of dozens of regional school boards, municipalities, community groups, and other non-governmental organizations who provide advice and assistance. As future stewards, students are encouraged to act responsibly at after-grad parties and other social events on public lands.

Recreation Corridors Legislative Review

The Alberta Recreation Corridors Legislative Review is focused on the needs, issues, and concerns related to the province's existing and future recreation corridors, and how legislation can support the development, maintenance, and operation of them.

The review committee consists of:

- Ray Danyluk, MLA Lac La Biche-St. Paul (chair)
- Jon Lord, MLA Calgary-Currie, and
- Ivan Strang, MLA West Yellowhead.

Between June 6 and July 24, interested Albertans were invited to make written submissions using a workbook that was available both on-line and by phone. Stakeholder workshops and public meetings in nine Alberta communities during June and July will be followed by a provincial forum for representatives of provincial organizations in the early fall. Then the committee will make its recommendations to the Minister of Community Development later in the fall.

Alberta Research Council establishing Integrated Resource Management program

A new integrated resource management program will identify and mitigate short-term and cumulative effects of resource development on human and animal health. "The Alberta Research Council has supported the responsible, sustainable development of those sectors of economic importance to Alberta for over 80 years," says the Council's Managing Director and CEO, John McDougall. "Our real strength, however, lies in our ability to assemble multidisciplinary teams to tackle complex industry challenges."

I believe the Research Council is well positioned to effect a more coordinated approach to the issues facing Alberta's primary resource industries. The time is certainly right for this kind of approach.

Dr. Richard Peter, vice president, Alberta Research Council

A goal of the Integrated Resource Management program is to be a scientific leader in risk assessment and technology development, with a mission to develop and promote holistic strategies for environmentally and socially sustainable resource development. It will serve as a forum to identify and resolve issues related to resource development. And, it will transfer knowledge on mitigating risks associated with industrial development – with emphasis on environmental pollution and food safety – to producers, consumers, and regulators.

In addition to scientific research, the program will include protocols and monitoring systems to examine the linkages between resource development, air, water, and land resources, human and animal health, and biodiversity.

Dr. Richard Peter has been appointed vice president of the new program, effective August 1, 2002. He joins ARC on secondment from the University of Alberta, following his 10-year term as dean, Faculty of Science. In his new role, Dr. Peter will initially draw on the corporation's existing applied research activities in air monitoring, water treatment, toxicology, and health. He will also be responsible for assembling the partners necessary for a more effective program from universities, Alberta and federal government departments, and other Canadian and international research organizations and agencies.

Regional Strategies

Cumulative Effects Workshop

On May 30, some of Alberta's cumulative effects experts advised Alberta Environment on designing regional strategies so that regional cumulative effects assessment and scenario generation could aid in project level decision-making.

Workshop participants agreed (96%) that it was feasible to develop a regional cumulative effects assessment and management structure that would help at the project level, with some conditions.

Continued on page 4

Cumulative Effects Workshop Contd.



**Cumulative effects experts from
industry and governments at
Alberta Environment Workshop**

Workshop participants then:

- identified 35 improvements that could make cumulative effects assessment (CEA) more efficient and effective in Alberta,
- developed two process proposals to improve project decision-making,
- discussed the desired results from a regional CEA, and
- provided advice which led to an eight-step work plan that will be undertaken to develop regional strategies so that they can be used in project level decision-making.

Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy (NES Strategy)

The next round of consultation on the NES Strategy, will take place in early fall. In the meantime work continues on several fronts:

- the Aboriginal Task Team is reviewing the draft report on Aboriginal consultations completed in March, and developing recommendations to the Regional Steering Group.
- a public opinion poll will be conducted in the NES Strategy area to help the Regional Steering Group understand how the public perceives the major issues identified to date.
- members of the Regional Steering Group are working with Alberta Environment's Integrated Resource Management Branch to develop a Regional Natural Resource Management System.

For more information on this Strategy, contact Judy May-McDonald by phone: (780) 723-8505 (for toll-free long distance, dial 310-0000, then dial the number) or by Email: judy.may-mcdonald@gov.ab.ca or check out the Web site at: www.gov.ab.ca/env/regions/neststrategy.html

What would you like to see in IRM Connections?

Please take a moment to complete the one-page evaluation (on-line at www.gov.ab.ca/env/irm/irm_newsletters.html) so we can continue to meet your information needs.

Are there initiatives we should feature, experts or organizations who could be interviewed or asked to contribute content, upcoming events we could promote, or resources we could publicize? Please contact the Editorial Board:

- Dave Belyea, Environment
- Don Bradshaw, Sustainable Resource Development
- Jamie Honda-McNeil, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
- Andrew Horton, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Wayne Jackson, Municipal Affairs
- Neil Morehouse, Economic Development
- Judy May-McDonald, Environment
- Nora Mortemore, Environment
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- Ken Sloman, Community Development
- Kevin Williams, Energy

by e-mail at: irm.newsletter@gov.ab.ca

or by phone at (780) 427-4857 (toll-free by dialing 310-0000 and then entering the number)

Connections

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A focus on water and
air

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Phase One of the first-ever water management plan under the *Water for People Act* has been approved by Cabinet and is now being implemented. The purpose of the South Saskatchewan River Basin Water Management Plan is to ensure the sustainable and equitable use of water in the basin, and to protect the environment.

Phase One

- Addresses designated "Direct" use of water, such as for agriculture, industry, and municipal use.

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The water management planning process is a continuation of work done by the South Saskatchewan Water Board, the South Saskatchewan Regional Council, and the South Saskatchewan Regional Development Commission, and the South Saskatchewan Regional Development Commission.

For each of the four sub-basins within the South Saskatchewan Water Board, a water management plan is being developed. The plans will take into account the needs of the different sectors of the basin, and will be developed in consultation with the different sectors. The plans will also take into account the needs of the environment, and will be developed in consultation with the different sectors.

The Basin Agency's mandate is to provide a regional water management plan for the basin. Each of the four sub-basins will have a water management plan, and the Basin Agency will develop a regional water management plan. The Basin Agency will also be responsible for the implementation of the plans.

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